

## **Herpes Zoster (Shingles)**

### **Definition:**

Herpes zoster (shingles) is a disease caused by the varicella zoster virus, the same virus that causes chickenpox. Shingles occurs when the virus is reactivated after being dormant in the body for several years. Although rare, shingles can occur in someone who received varicella vaccine in the past.

### **Signs and Symptoms:**

Symptoms include a painful, itchy rash on one side of the face or body. The rash is often preceded by pain, burning, or tingling in the area where the rash appears. In immunocompromised persons, the rash may appear more generalized and look similar to chickenpox. Fever, chills, headache, and upset stomach can also occur.

### **Transmission:**

Shingles is not spread from person to person. Only people who have had chickenpox can get shingles. However, someone with shingles can spread chickenpox to someone who has never had chickenpox before. The virus is spread through direct contact with draining lesions only when the rash is in the blister phase. Transmission cannot occur before the blisters appear. Unlike chickenpox, transmission does not occur through coughing, sneezing, or casual contact. Once the rash has developed crusts, the person is no longer contagious. The risk of a person with shingles spreading the virus is low if the rash is covered.

### **Diagnosis:**

Shingles is diagnosed by clinical symptoms, and laboratory confirmation in certain cases.

### **Role of the School Nurse:**

- Update and maintain vaccine records
- All school-aged children in schools are required to have one documented dose of the varicella vaccine by state statute
- Children age 13 and over with no reliable history of varicella or vaccination should receive 2 doses of varicella vaccine given at least 4 weeks apart
- Encourage shingles vaccination of staff 60 years of age and older
- **Ensure rash is covered during the blister phase**
- Promote proper hand washing particularly after contact with the rash or after changing bandages to prevent the spread of disease

### **Exclusions:**

- There are no exclusions for shingles unless the rash cannot be covered during the blister phase
- There are no exclusions for unvaccinated students or students with incomplete varicella immunization records

**Reporting Requirements:**

Shingles is not a reportable condition, but nurses may consult with Maine CDC, if needed, at 1-800-821-5821.

**Resources:**

- American Academy of Pediatrics. Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools: A Quick Reference Guide. Aronson S, Shope T, eds. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2009.
- Committee on Infectious Diseases. Red Book, 2012 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases. 29<sup>th</sup> ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases. Atkinson W, Wolfe S, Hamborsky J, eds. 12<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington DC: Public Health Foundation, 2011.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Shingles (Herpes Zoster): <http://www.cdc.gov/shingles/index.html>. Accessed September 17, 2013.
- Heymann, David L., MD. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual. 19<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: American Public Health Association, 2008.